

# 7 Questions to Ask Before You Submit Your Essay

## Did I Revise and Proofread My Essays?

You might be surprised by how often admissions officers run into unclear sentences, typos, and run-on sentences. Sometimes it truly seems that students haven't **proofread their essays**. While this may not necessarily hurt your chances of getting accepted, sloppy essays can prompt admissions officers to wonder just how much effort and attention you put into your essays. Whether you've revised or proofread should be the number one question you ask yourself.

As tedious as it may sound, reading your essay out loud will be the number one way to catch any **spelling or grammar errors**. It will also give you a chance to hear how well the writing flows, whether there are any run-on sentences or fragments, and whether your voice is clear and concise. Another great option is to have a second set of eyes double check for typos, whether that be a parent, college counselor, or independent counselor. Don't forget to revise and proofread one more time after you've asked yourself the rest of the questions below.

## Did I Answer the Question?

This might seem obvious but think about it: did you *actually* answer the question? Re-read each of the **prompts** and their corresponding answers. Are your essays fully addressing the question being asked?

It's also important to consider that the prompt isn't always a question. Sometimes, it's a statement like, "write about a favorite passion or activity." In this case, you should ask yourself: does my essay do what the prompt is telling me to do?

## Did I Demonstrate Self-Reflection?

More importantly, did you reflect on your answers? Remember, essays and supplements are a way for admissions officers to get to know you better, so make sure to show ample reflection. If you're discussing a moment from your childhood that shaped you into the person you are today, explain why and how

this particular moment impacted you, not just the effect it had. If you're answering a **supplement prompt** about what course you would add to the program to which you're applying, explain why your choice would be interesting or important to you. Yes, studying botany in the Amazon rainforest would be cool, but why does it matter to *you*?

## Did I Answer Every Part of a Multiple-Part Question?

Many prompts have multiple questions or statements. Sometimes, they may be a bit hidden within the body of a prompt. Be careful and thorough in your reading.

As you review your essays, try highlighting your writing in different colors, each color representing a prompt question. For example, if the prompt asks you to 1) describe a way that you have contributed to your community and 2) describe how you will contribute to communities at X College, highlight the answer to part one in blue and part two in yellow. This is a fool-proof way to make sure you're actually answering both parts of the prompt and that they each have enough space in your essay.

## Is My Essay Specific?

If you're answering a **university-specific essay**, does your essay show that you have done truly school-specific research, or does it sound vague? It's essential that your essay be as specific as possible, especially because it asks you why you are interested in or want to go to that specific college or university.

One way to ensure specificity is to include at least three details. For example, you could say that you're interested in attending a particular college because of the resources they offer in your intended major. Then, you could name a particular professor and their research as a driving factor, explaining how you hope to conduct similar research alongside this professor. Finally, you could name one or two **extracurricular activities** you want to get involved in, referencing how they may relate to what you have already accomplished in high school.

Don't write general and generic declarative sentences. Read the sentence back to yourself and ask: could this be about any college, or is it about this specific college?

## Am I Repeating Myself?

Sometimes, students are very eager to make a specific point. Maybe you're worried about your level of involvement so you're bringing it up at every turn. Maybe you struggled in a particular class your freshman year and you want to put it in context to make sure that it doesn't affect you negatively. However, if you bring it up often, you're only reminding readers of your weak points. Mention it once – if appropriate – and move on.

At the same time, it's important to make sure you're not repeating yourself when it comes to your strong suits and your accolades. For example, if you are writing a [personal statement](#) about your debate team's unlikely route to success, make sure you're not also writing about debate in your supplements.

## Do These Essays Sound Like Me?

One of the biggest mistakes students make in the college application process is trying to sound like someone else or who they think colleges want them to be. When you're done with your applications, take a minute to ask yourself whether [your essays actually sound like you](#). Are you writing something genuine, or are you writing what you think colleges want to see? This may sound like a good idea, but remember, colleges are looking for well-rounded classes and to fill institutional needs. Your best bet is to showcase your authentic self in your best light.

You can always do some tweaking, starting with tone, to make sure that you're submitting something you feel confident in.

Now that you've made these updates, go back and ask yourself the first question: did I revise and proofread my essay? If the answer is yes, you are ready to submit!